

Serve Montana Symposium  
Focus Areas and Panel of Experts Session: Economic Opportunity  
February 11, 2010

Facilitator: Michelle Hauer

Panelists:

- Paul Lachapelle, PHD Montana State University
- Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, Hopa Mountain
- Jim Nolan, Montana DPHHS, Human and Community Services Division
- Peggy Grimes – Montana Food Bank Network

## 1. What is Economic Opportunity?

**Paul Lachapelle:** Described it as the entire community picture of cultural socio-economic, cultural, infrastructure and leadership combined. Community exists in a natural environment that is respected and sustained, ensuring that it contributes to quality of peace. He provided three handouts explaining the framework (attached). He discussed his involvement with the male Crow Indian's medical health, and also explained the Horizons Program which helps to build leadership skills within communities. Paul looks at a broader economic development through culture, social, political, natural and human capital.

**Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer:** Expressed the biggest need is to mentor on a one-on-one basis. Through mentoring, issues can be more easily identified. She also addressed small business and not only helping develop small business, but also sustaining them. *Imagine Montana* is a new program to work with low income families to identify issues that can influence State Legislature. Another program – nonprofit board development and strategic planning is a totally new program where the Hopa organization would help communities to start new boards. She stressed illiteracy and the need for reading – starting at an early age by parents – engaging siblings or grandparents to help the child read.

**Jim Nolan:** Stated that Montana has the highest rate of poverty in the intermountain area. The census is really important to bring in more federal funds. Encourage our communities to fill it out. He discussed the increase in the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and Weatherization Program, both with waiting lists. Homelessness and housing are also growing issues, and there are not enough resources.

**Peggy Grimes:** Discussed providing food to low-income families on the local level. Last year the need increased 60%. She explained the Backpack Program which provides a bag of groceries to each child in the family on weekends and holidays. She discussed a Mobile Food Pantry which travels to communities without food banks to provide food to low income families and identify the need to start a food bank in their community. *Endless Sky* is a new program to utilize inmates to process food for food banks, institutions, etc. The *Grasp Project*, (Growing Resources and Sustaining

People) aims to reduce hunger in Montana through county level initiative by increasing food security-or the ability to consistently access nutritious food. It is now in 4 counties and should be in 16 by the end of the year.

## **2. What can I do in my community?**

- Informational interviews on issues
- Bring together people who champion the same issues.
- Government has less to offer and we need to seek from within the community
- Volunteer
- Network with other communities

### **Small Group Discussion:**

Bring Community together to attack poverty Economic Opportunity – Systemic approach

1. Look at economic development through community development lens
2. Engage communities through dialogue. Talk about it
3. Invest in citizen leaders
4. Mentor ideas into action
5. Asset mapping
6. Find passionate people
7. One change to be successful